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## MATTERS THEATRIC.

One of the largest audiences ever seen within the walls of the French Theatre gathered there on Monday evening to witness the production of Giacometti's tragedy of "Marie Antoinette." This is the *piece de resistance* of Madame Ristori's present engagement, and is produced for the first time before an American audience; for the latter reason it is hardly fair to judge too harshly of its merits or demerits until it has received the attention of the "pruning-knife." As it stands now, "Marie Antoinette" is too long a play to ever become thoroughly popular with an American audience. Like its predecessor, "Elizabeth," it gives us a lifelike picture of the period it represents. We are brought face to face with the queen, the weak king, the chivalric Lafayette, the blood-stained Robespierre, and all the other historic characters of the French Revolution—that stupendous and wholesale butchery, in which the cant of universal liberty was made the cloak for crimes of the blackest description.

Beginning with the pleasures and merri-ment of Trianon, we are carried on, step by step, through the whole dreary story, culminating with the departure of Marie Antoinette from the Conciergerie to the guillotine. All this Giacometti has told us in vigorous, pointed dialogue and well-developed scenes; the play is well constructed, and the situations are at times intensely powerful. The only fault is diffuseness—a too great elaboration of ideas and, to a limited extent, a paucity of dramatic situation. All this worked against the play upon its first representation, and when it is said that it proved an overwhelming success, it only shows how thoroughly, and with what pure artistic feeling, the performance must have been presented. A few nights experience will show where "the knife" can be used with advantage, and then, properly compressed, "Marie Antoinette" promises to run for the remainder of the season.

As *Marie Antoinette*, Madame Ristori fairly surpassed herself. From beginning to end it is a truthfully conceived, artistically carried out, grand piece of acting. In the earlier portions of the play her powers are not so much brought into requisition, but after the grand burst which closes the first act, when she fearlessly presents herself before the mob at Versailles, until the tragic end, she thoroughly identifies herself with the unhappy queen, presenting a picture that for truthfulness and dramatic power has rarely been equalled upon the American or foreign stage. There are but few of those stormy bursts of passion in "Marie Antoinette" which characterize the "Elizabeth"—it is a story of suffering, of heart-burnings, and of misery, and in the interpretation of these Madame Ristori inspires us with alternate

feelings of commiseration for the queen, hatred for her enemies. She sways her audiences with her own imperious mood, causing them to smile, to weep at her command. It is impossible to write a satisfactory criticism of the lady's performance of the part after witnessing but one representation—it would be doing injustice to Madame Ristori, to the writer—a part such as this cannot be lightly criticised, but requires, and deserves, a closer study than the early hour of going to press will permit us this week.

The other characters were, for the most part, played in a creditable manner by Madame Ristori's excellent company; Sigs. Bozzo and Gleck receiving particular applause for their admirable performance of the respective rôles of *Louis XVI.* and *Lafayette*. They are both artists of great talent, and thoroughly conscientious in the performance of all they undertake.

The scenery, which has been especially imported from Europe for the production of this piece, is probably the finest we have ever seen in this country—that is, finest from a purely artistic point of view; there is nothing flashy or sensational about it, but throughout all a strict adherence to nature and propriety. The scene in the third act, of the mob forcing its way into the Tuilleries, is a finely conceived and presented tableau.

Altogether, "Marie Antoinette" may be considered as a great success, and has doubtless presented to us Madame Ristori in one of the finest efforts of her genius; it will probably never become so universally popular as "Elizabeth," on account of the sombreness of the subject, but as a piece of dramatic composition it must always be looked upon as remarkably full of vigor and power; while as a piece of acting it can never be regarded in any light other than that of a masterpiece.

"The Devil's Auction" according to promise, was produced at Banvard's Opera House on Thursday evening of last week, and has proved a decided and overwhelming success. Mr. De Pol may be congratulated upon having struck the popular fancy. We are all agog for any new sensation now-a-days, and the "Devil's Auction" is a sensation of the purest water. Since the inauguration of the "Black Crook," we have had nothing in the dramatic, or more properly speaking, the Terpsichorean line, that promises to be so thorough a success. Like the "Black Crook," the play can boast but little of its literary merits; but we have become accustomed to that now, and if the *ballet* is but good, being a purely spectacular piece, we have no cause to grumble. That the ballet of the "Devil's Auction" is far superior to anything of the sort we have yet had in this country, no one can for a moment question. Mesdames Blasina, Sohlke, Dioni, Lupo, and Ricci are perfect mistresses of their art,

and enchant the beholder by the most bewitching pirouettes.

The story is much like the old story of the pantomimes: a very poor young man is in love with a very pretty young woman—said young woman is betrothed to a very wicked old baron—"the course of true love," &c., &c., &c.—an auction is held at the castle of a defunct magician—young man, aided by fairy shekels, purchases charm, wicked old baron purchases charm, funny old man and ditto chambermaid ditto, ditto. Wicked old baron and funny old man pursue the lovers to every quarter of the globe—virtue is triumphant and villainy correspondingly disconcerted. Miss Fanny Stocqueler, as *Rosemary*, looks very charming and makes all that possibly can be made of the character. Mr. McWade, who makes his first bow before a New York audience, is exceedingly droll in his dual character of serving man and donkey, while the rest of the parts are played with good ability.

But it is in the Terpsichorean department that the "Devil's Auction" is particularly strong. Mesdames Blasina and Sohlke are by all odds the two best *danseuses* we have ever had in this country, and more thoroughly realize the "poetry of motion" than any exponents of this art we have yet had. The "Syren Dance," in the first act, the "Pas de Ministers," in the second, and the inimitable "Hungarian Polka" of Mlle. Sohlke, in the third are, *par excellence*, the perfection of dancing.

The scenery, by Calyo, is thoroughly artistic; it may not be so dazzlingly gorgeous as that of the "Black Crook," but there is a smack of thorough artistic excellence about it that is wonderfully charming. "El Dorado," the "Abode of Bacchus," and the final transformation scene are particularly worthy of notice. "Take it for all in all," "The Devil's Auction" is a decided "hit," a "palpable hit," and will doubtless delight many people and win much wealth for the management.

"Rip Van Winkle" holds out for another week at the Olympic; then "Midsummer Night's Dream," and multifarious gorgeousness of scenery.

The un-sylphlike "Cuban Sylph" has fully demonstrated the "naked drama" at the New York Theatre, to crowded houses, throughout the week.

Leffingwell has delighted many people by his absurd *Widow Twanky*, in "Aladdin," at the Fifth Avenue Theatre.

Edwin Forrest closes his engagement at the Broadway Theatre this evening.

Madame Janauschek has appeared at the Academy, but too late for notice this week.

The weather is cold, the theatres are crowded, Wallack's is not succeeding very well with "Black-eyed Susan," and—*voilà tout*.  
SHUGGE.